UNITED NATIONS

UNEP

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

BES

IPBES/6/INF/22

Distr.: General
13 February 2018

English only

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
Sixth session
Medellín, Colombia, 18–24 March 2018
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Report of the Executive Secretary on the implementation of the first work programme for the period 2014–2018

Implementation of the conflict of interest policy for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Note by the secretariat

By its decision IPBES-3/3, on procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables, the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services adopted the conflict of interest policy and implementation procedures set out in annex II to that decision. The annex to the present note, which is presented without formal editing, provides information on the progress made in implementing the policy, and a report to the Plenary by the Committee on Conflicts of Interest on its activities, which the Committee submitted in accordance with rule 10 of the implementation procedures.

* IPBES/6/1

K1800323 140218

Annex

Composition of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest

1. A Committee on Conflicts of Interest was established in 2015, following the third session of the Plenary, in accordance with rule 10 of the conflict-of-interest policy and implementation procedures. Following election of the new Bureau at the fourth session of the Plenary, Robert Watson (Chair, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and Leonel Sierralta (Chile) stepped down from the Committee, and Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana, Bureau vice-chair for African Group) became chair of the Committee. Following the departure of Kevin Joseph Cash, from Canada, from the Committee, after the fifth session, a call was issued to IPBES members on 11 January 2018 for candidates from the Western Europe and Others Group, with a deadline of 2 February 2018, and one nomination received for Jean-François Silvain, from France, who was selected by the Bureau.

2. The Committee is composed of the following 9 members:

(a) 3 Bureau members:

Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana), Chair

Diego Pacheco (Plurinational State of Bolivia)

Rashad Allahverdiyev (Azerbaijan)

(b) 5 members, one per UN region:

Helena Nader (Brazil)

Jean-François Silvain (France)

Haigen Xu (China)

Kaouthar Tliche Aloui (Tunisia)

Nilay (Çabuk) Kaya (Turkey)

(c) 1 legal counsel:

Maria Socorro Manguiat, Head of National Environmental Law Unit, Law Division, UNEP, is serving as the "additional member with appropriate legal expertise from, and appointed by the organization hosting the secretariat" (rule 10).

Actions taken

3. All relevant individuals were invited by the secretariat to submit disclosure forms electronically through an online form (appendix to annex II to decision IPBES-3/3).

4. The secretariat compiled all responses received and submitted to Committee members a summary spreadsheet of all submissions asking whether any conflict was identified.

5. Experts were required to submit a disclosure form for each deliverable they were involved in, in situations where they contributed to several deliverables.

6. The Committee reviewed the compiled information, which on 9 February 2018 corresponded to 94% of the expected disclosure forms. No teleconference was organised because no conflict was signalled either by an expert, or by a member of the Committee.

7. The secretariat will actively seek to receive the remainder of the forms.

8. The Committee sent to the secretariat the letter set out in the appendix below for submission to the Plenary. The letter constitutes the Committee's report on its activities and is being submitted to the Plenary for information, pursuant to rule 10, paragraph 5, of the conflict of interest policy, according to which the Committee will submit a report on its activities to the Plenary at least four weeks prior to each session of the Plenary.

Appendix

Report of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest to the Plenary on its activities

Dear Governments and Observers

The Conflicts of interest Committee has reviewed all conflict of interest forms submitted to date (9 February, 2018), since the fifth session of the Plenary, amounting to 67 forms, and bringing the total number of forms reviewed since the establishment of the Committee to 1132.

When examining an individual's conflict of interest (COI) form, the Committee spent considerable time differentiating between "biases" and "conflict of interest". The IPBES Plenary (Annex II of Decision IPBES-3/3) defined a conflict of interest as any current interest of an individual that could either: (i) significantly impair the individual's objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for the Platform, or (ii) create an unfair advantage for any person or organization. Whereas bias, as defined in the IPBES policy on COI, refers to a point of view or perspective that is strongly held by an individual regarding a particular issue or set of issues.

The strength of IPBES is to ensure that the experts involved in preparing the assessment reports (co-chairs, coordinating lead authors, lead authors and review editors) represent a wide range of experiences, views and perspectives. The Committee recognized that all experts, whether from academia, government, private sector or NGOs, have biases. This is part of human nature. As noted in the COI policy, bias is managed through the selection of experts with a balance of perspectives, and through the peer review process.

The Committee reviewed all new forms since the fifth session and noted that none had signalled a conflict of interest.

The Committee did not find any conflicts of interests as defined in annex II of decision IPBES-3/3.

The Committee noted that as 9 February, 2018 the secretariat was missing 40 forms from experts and 25 from Multidisciplinary Expert Panel nominees. Given the fact that the conflict of interest policy requires senior leadership of the Platform and authors with responsibility for report content to submit such a form, the Committee exhorts the secretariat to remind all relevant experts that a condition for being involved in an IPBES activity is compliance with the conflict of interest policy.

Alfred Oteng-Yeboah

Chair of the Committee on Conflict of Interest

On behalf of the Committee